

13. Hesychasm and psalmody

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One might logically expect that Byzantine hesychasm would have very little to do with psalmody (ψαλμωδία). The biblical Psalter, of course, has always been the prayerbook of Christian monasticism, but serious cultivation of ἡσυχία (literally 'quietude') would seem to presuppose constraints on psalmody in its more general sense of ecclesiastical chanting. Nevertheless, the fourteenth century, which witnessed the triumph of hesychast theology in the Orthodox Church, was also a time of such unparalleled musical creativity that one scholar has even labelled it a 'Byzantine *ars nova*'.¹ For the first time in the history of Byzantine chant, the names of composers – as opposed to hymnographers – appear in manuscripts alongside their musical works,² many of which belong to an ornate new repertoire of 'beautified' or kalophonic chant. Even more remarkable in this regard is the identity of the outstanding musical figure of this time: St John Koukouzeles, a monk of the Great Lavra on Mt Athos who, according to his *Vita*, would spend weekdays outside the monastery walls practising *hesychia*.

¹ Edward V. Williams, 'A Byzantine *ars nova*: the 14th-century reforms of John Koukouzeles in the chanting of Great Vespers', in Henrik Birnbaum and Speros Vryonis, Jr., eds, *Aspects of the Balkans: Continuity and Change* (The Hague, 1972), 229; and idem., 'John Koukouzeles's reform of Byzantine chanting for Great Vespers in the fourteenth century' (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1968), 388.

² A representative list of these fourteenth-century composers and their fifteenth-century successors ~~is~~ provided by Milos Velimirović in his study 'Byzantine composers in ms. Athens 2406' in Jack Westrup, ed., *Essays Presented to Egon Wellesz* (Oxford, 1966), 7–18.

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The apparent peculiarity of a hesychast monk contemporary with Gregory Palamas leading the way toward greater musical virtuosity has not entirely escaped musicologists,³ but the spiritual and liturgical context of the Koukouzelian reforms has thus far remained largely undefined.⁴ This study will therefore be devoted to a preliminary exploration of the relationship between late Byzantine monasticism and psalmody broadly defined in an attempt to provide some tentative answers to two fundamental questions:

1. What do the writings and *Vitae* of hesychast fathers tell us about chanting?
2. What was their worship really like?

The hesychast fathers and psalmody

Monastic enthusiasm for chanted psalmody has fluctuated over the centuries according to the general spiritual climate and the particular form of asceticism being practised. The vehement opposition of early Christian monks to the urban practices of chanting and non-scriptural hymnography is well known.⁵ By the early fourteenth century, however, liturgical chanting seems to have been regarded in a generally positive light by monastic authors. Metropolitan Theoleptos of Philadelphia, whom Gregory Palamas mentions as one of his forerunners in hesychasm,⁶ frequently stresses the value of listening to psalmody in his writings. In a homily for the Sunday of the Paralytic,⁷ Theoleptos speaks strongly of the need for the faithful to keep the feasts of saints 'by going off to the churches of God and faithfully keeping the vigils of psalmody', further instructing his congregation to 'perform the services for the saints with night-long stations and patient entreaties'.⁸ As a result of participating in worship and listening to the psalmody, he writes, one's soul will find 'healing and salvation'.⁹

³ See Williams's discussion of 'The hesychast question', in Williams, 'John Koukouzeles's reform', 348–52.

⁴ Despite his recognition of hesychast influence on Koukouzeles's life as a monk, Williams associates his musical innovations either with the 'Byzantine humanism' of the 'Paleologan renaissance' (ibid., 379–83) or simply as a 'vehicle for prodigious singers' to practise their 'virtuoso art' (298).

⁵ See Johannes Quasten's chapter on 'The doctrine of Katanyxis. Oriental monasticism as inimical to artistic singing. The character of Oriental piety', in his *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Washington, DC, 1983), 94–99.

⁶ John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (2nd edn, London, 1974), 17.

⁷ The fourth Sunday after Orthodox Easter. Included as *Monastic Discourse* (MD) 19 in Robert E. Sinkewicz, ed. and trans., *Theoleptos of Philadelphia: The Monastic Discourses* (Toronto, 1992).

⁸ Theoleptos, MD 19, 317–19.

⁹ MD 19, 323.

Similarly convinced of its therapeutic effects, Gregory Palamas himself, during his tenure as archbishop of Thessalonike, devoted an entire sermon to explaining 'How unremitting supplication to God through prayer and psalmody is the seat and assurance of all good and the averting and redemption from all evil and difficulty'.¹⁰ On the pretext of admonishing his congregation for their poor church attendance during the recent harvest, Palamas speaks at length in this homily of the vital necessity and potentially miraculous benefits of liturgical psalmody.¹¹ He even goes a step further than Theoleptos by warning his flock of the dire ills that will befall them should they neglect sung worship.¹²

Contemporary writings directed specifically towards a monastic rather than a lay audience refine this favourable view of psalmody by emphasizing the ascetic component of psalmodic vigils. In the instructional treatises on the monastic life written for Eirene-Eulogia Choumnaina and the nuns of the monastery of Philanthropos Soter, Metropolitan Theoleptos lists regular psalmody (τῇ ἐϋρύθμῳ ψαλμῳδίᾳ) as one of a 'decatalogue' of monastic virtues that also include 'freedom from possessions, flight from people, abstinence from willed pleasures, patient endurance of unwilled afflictions, ... reading with concentration, attentive prayer, moderated denial of sleep, genuflections performed with compunction, and eloquent silence'.¹³ Elsewhere he classifies it – along with 'vigils, prayer, ... reading and constant meditation on the divine scriptures' – as a practice that will 'root out the attachment to the world and raise high the discursive intellect', revealing thereby 'the pure air of divine contemplation'.¹⁴

A further qualification found in monastic literature is the differentiation of private and congregational forms of psalmody. Theoleptos, who sees a need for both in cenobitic life, recommends that psalmody should be performed both in choir during services as required,¹⁵ and alone in one's cell at night with a quiet voice.¹⁶ In either case, he counsels that the discursive intellect (διάνοια) should always be focused on prayer,¹⁷ for the primary danger he sees in vocal psalmody is distraction.¹⁸ If it is not

¹⁰ 'Ὁμιλία ΝΑ', 'Ὅτι ἡ πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν συνεχὴς διὰ προσευχῆς καὶ ψαλμωδίας ἐντευξίς, ἔδρα καὶ ἀσφάλειά ἐστι παντὸς καὶ λού καὶ ἀποτροπὴ καὶ λύτρωσις πάσης κακίας τε καὶ δυσχειρείας', in Gregory Palamas, *Ὁμιλῆαι* KB (Athens, 1861), 108.

¹¹ Palamas, 114 and 116.

¹² Ibid., 115.

¹³ Theoleptos, MD 3. 163.

¹⁴ MD 14 ('On humility and the different virtues'). 271–73.

¹⁵ MD 1, 107.

¹⁶ MD 1, 105.

¹⁷ MD 1, 101 and 107.

¹⁸ MD 1, 97; MD 9. 225–27.

performed in the right spirit, or especially if there is hatred in the soul,¹⁹ all effort expended in psalmody will be meaningless.

St Gregory of Sinai (c. 1265–1346), a hesychast ascetic who pointedly avoided the positions of public leadership that so many of his disciples and colleagues accepted, provides a slightly different perspective. Like Theoleptos, he classifies psalmody as a monastic virtue, suggesting lengthy sessions of it both for novices and for more experienced monks.²⁰ In several mildly defensive spiritual chapters dealing specifically with the issue of psalmody and hesychasm,²¹ however, the Sinaite introduces a seemingly radical distinction between cenobitic and anchoritic practice by declaring that lengthy sessions of chanting are a form of prayer appropriate only for the 'πρακτικοί' of the cenobitic monasteries. While not lacking in eremetical smugness, Gregory is still gracious enough to admit that, over many years and through much ascetic labour, such chanting can in fact lead to true contemplation if practised in the right spirit. Despite this possibility, however, he instructs solitaries and skete-dwellers to chant only a little and ideally not at all, for their goal is the attainment of a state of silent contemplation in which vocal psalmody of any sort is rendered superfluous.

Of course, even among practising hesychasts, unbroken communion with God in this earthly life is a very rare thing indeed. Evidently cognisant of this reality, Gregory provides the individual ascetic with a more practical solution – namely that psalmody in moderation, like reading or physical work, should be employed as relaxation from the rigours of hesychastic contemplation.²² When necessary, a solitary should rise, say the *Trisagion* with proper care and, if overtaken by *akedia*, follow it with two or three psalms and a pair of penitential *troparia* performed *ἀνευ μέλους*. If accompanied by a disciple, the elder monk should meditate upon the meaning of the words as the student reads the psalms.

¹⁹ MD 7, 207.

²⁰ St Gregory includes psalmody as an integral part of the recommended daily regimens for three grades of hesychast monks that appear in chapters 99 and 101 of the so-called Κεφάλαια πάνυ ὠφέλιμα (*Philokalia* IV [3rd edn, Athens, 1960], 47–48). Although David Balfour has interpreted these rules as inclusive of the liturgical offices, it remains open to question whether the latter were to be sung privately or in common at each of the three stages. In any case, given the Sinaite's general avoidance of the subject of communal worship (including the Eucharist!) in his writings, his failure to provide aspiring hesychasts with specific instructions regarding the offices does not necessarily exclude their common celebration. See Balfour, 'The works of Gregory the Sinaite', *Theologia* 54 (1983), 175–81; and Bishop Kallistos Ware, 'The Jesus Prayer in St Gregory of Sinai', *Eastern Churches Review* IV (1972), 10–11.

²¹ *Philokalia* IV, 73–76 and 82–84. Listed in Balfour's classification of Gregory's works as Κεφάλαια Δ', 4–9 and Ε', 5, these chapters were presumably composed in response to unnamed critics who valued psalmody very highly and were therefore suspicious of those claiming to achieve contemplation through the psychosomatic method of prayer. See Balfour, 'The works of Gregory', 172–73.

²² Balfour, 'The works of Gregory', 75–76.

Although the Sinaite's discussion noticeably fails to address participation in the choral offices,²³ one does not have to look far for monks who balanced the solitary life with choral chanting, for fidelity to community life and the sacraments was, as Fr John Meyendorff pointed out, a general trademark of fourteenth-century hesychasm.²⁴ Gregory Palamas and John Koukouzeles, to choose the most obvious examples, were both cantors at the Great Lavra during the first half of the fourteenth century. According to their respective *Vitae*, they were also the recipients of supernatural visitations that helped assure their continued liturgical participation. St Antony admonished Palamas not to neglect worship in common out of any belief in the superiority of mental prayer,²⁵ whereas the Theotokos not only commanded Koukouzeles to sing for her, but also healed him of illnesses resulting from too many hours of standing in choir.²⁶

More important for our present purposes are the parallel descriptions of exactly how the two saints balanced solitude and community life: each would spend his weekdays in *hesychia* at a hermitage outside the monastery wall and join their brethren on weekends for liturgical worship.²⁷ This weekly cycle is immediately identifiable as the old lavriote form of Palestinian monasticism that had recently been revived throughout the Orthodox world with the dissemination of a revised '*Typikon* of St Sabas'.²⁸ First adopted on Athos at Chilandar in the year 1190, this flexible 'neo-Sabaitic' usage accommodated a variety of monastic forms of life, and was therefore arguably better suited in the long run to the realities of the Holy Mountain than the tightly organized Stoudite monasticism that had been imported by St Athanasios the Athonite. In place of a daily cycle of choral offices attended by the entire community, neo-Sabaiticism, like its ancient forebear, allowed for solitary prayer during the week and maintained a sense of community primarily through its liturgical centrepiece: a weekly vigil of the Resurrection known as the *agrypnia* that would culminate in the Sunday Divine Liturgy.²⁹ Because this vigil is unquestionably the office that

²³ Cf. note 20 supra.

²⁴ Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 39.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Williams, 'John Koukouzeles's reform', 346–48, 351 and 504–6.

²⁷ Ibid., 350–51.

²⁸ Robert Taft, 'Mount Athos: a late chapter in the history of the Byzantine rite', *DOP* 42 (1988), 187–90. See also Miguel Arranz, 'Les grandes étapes de la liturgie byzantine: Palestine–Byzance–Russie: Essai d'aperçu historique', *Liturgie de l'église particulière et liturgie de l'église universelle. Ephemerides Liturgicae Subsidia* 7 (Rome, 1975), 67–70.

²⁹ For the history of the *agrypnia* and its diffusion throughout the Greek-speaking world, see N.D. Uspensky, 'Chin vsenoshchnogo bdeniia (h agrypnia) na pravoslavnom vostoke i v russkoï tserkvi', chs. I–V, *Bogoslovskie Trudy* 18, (1978), 5–117, esp. ch. V, 'Chin vsenoshchnogo bdeniia na Afone', 100–17. See also Arranz's extended discussion of an earlier draft of Uspensky's study, 'L'office de la veillée nocturne dans l'église grecque et dans l'église russe', *OCP* 42 (1976): 117–55, 402–25; trans. into English as N.D. Uspensky, 'The office of the all-night vigil in the Greek and in the Russian Church', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 24 (1980), 83–113, 169–75.

Palamas and Koukouzeles regularly returned to the Great Lavra to attend, it is now appropriate to take a brief look at this fourteenth-century liturgical counterweight to the private cultivation of *hesychia*.

Psalmody and monastic liturgy

In its original form, dating from the era of profound monastic hostility to ecclesiastical poetry and cathedral styles of chant, the Palestinian *agrypnia* was an ascetic exercise featuring the recitation of the entire biblical psalter in the course of a single night.³⁰ Since that time, eastern monastic liturgy had undergone extensive development, most prominently at the hands of St Theodore and his successors at the monastery of Stoudios in Constantinople. The Stoudites had forged their own rite by combining the offices of the Palestinian *Horologion* or 'Book of the Hours' with the *Euchologion* of the Great Church, the latter being the collection of prayers used in the imperial cathedral rite, otherwise known as the *asmatike akolouthia* or 'sung office'.³¹ Simultaneously, they absorbed the Constantinopolitan lectionaries of the Great Church together with their related repertoires of elaborate chant, including the complete cycles of melismatic *prokeimena*, *alleluiaria*, and communion hymns, as well as the capital's unique repertory of *kontakia*.³² The Stoudites subsequently proceeded to enlarge the pre-existing Palestinian collections of hymnography ornamenting the psalms and canticles of the *Horologion*, adding newly composed cycles of hymns for every day of the week to the original Sunday Resurrectional *Octoechos* while simultaneously compiling the *Triodion* and the *Pentekostarion* for the yearly Paschal cycle. By the time their creative activity had run its course, each day of the calendar year had been provided with a complete set of propers to complement the Byzantine *Synaxarion*, thereby forming the Orthodox Church's twelve-volume set of *Menaia*.

On the whole, it seems that the music for this vast corpus of hymnography remained unobtrusively tied to the text, for the books containing musical notation that begin to appear in the eleventh century reveal a repertory of chant that was overwhelmingly dominated by textual concerns rather than any concept of 'music for music's sake'. The two major collections of notated hymns for the monastic offices, the *Heirmologion* and the

³⁰ Taft, 'Mount Athos', 188.

³¹ The history of this 'Stoudite synthesis' is summarized in Arranz, 'Les grandes étapes', 49–55, 62–67; and Taft, 'Mount Athos', 180–87, the latter of which also provides extensive bibliographic references.

³² These chants appear in the *psaltikon* and the *asmatikon*, respectively the solo and choir books of the cathedral rite. Almost all the surviving copies of these musical mss were produced for the Stoudite monasteries of Southern Italy. See Oliver Strunk, 'S. Salvatore di Messina and the musical tradition of Magna Graecia', in his *Essays on Music in the Byzantine World* (New York, 1977), 45–54.

Sticherarion,³³ employ relatively simple and essentially syllabic melodies constructed out of standard melodic formulae for each mode.³⁴ Thanks to an elaborate system of model melodies, known in Greek as *automela* (in the case of *stichera*) or *heirmoi* (in the case of canons), the purely musical impact of these chants is further diluted by the large number of contrafacta texts to which they were applied. Elaborate music, while it did exist, was largely confined in the Stoudite rite to the solo and choral chants that had been absorbed from the *asmatike akolouthia*,³⁵ none of which were as virtuosic as the later kalophonic repertory.

As one moves to consider the relationship of music to liturgy in the fourteenth century, it is important to remember that Stoudite forms of worship, which had arrived on Athos with St Athanasios and cenobitism, persisted as the foundation for its neo-Sabaitic successor. With regard to its official texts – that is, those transmitted in the canonical service books – the restored *agrypnia* is essentially a combination of Stoudite vespers and matins that includes all of their ecclesiastical poetry, together with an additional *kathisma* from the Psalter during certain parts of the year.³⁶ Moreover, as codified by Gregory Palamas's friend and biographer, Philotheos Kokkinos, during the latter's tenure as abbot of the Great Lavra,³⁷ this service not only maintains much of the cathedral-style ceremonial that had been adopted by the Stoudites, but also continues to require considerable personnel for its performance.³⁸

Interestingly, the most radical innovations of the hesychasts' all-night vigil are almost undetectable in the standard liturgical books, for they appear in a vast new repertory of music transmitted primarily in a musical collection attributed to John Koukouzeles with the title of *akolouthiai* or

³³ The *Heirmologion* and the *Sticherarion* contain, respectively, model melodies for canons and *stichera*. On these and other Byzantine liturgical books, see Kenneth Levy, 'Liturgy and liturgical books. III. Greek rite', in Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 11 (London, 1980), 86–88.

³⁴ Levy, 'Byzantine Rite, music of the, 10. Syllabic hymn settings', *The New Grove Dictionary* 3, 557–59.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 559.

³⁶ On the use of the Psalter, see Taft, 'Mount Athos', 190.

³⁷ 'Διάταξις τῆς Ἱεροδιακονίας' printed in Goar, *Euchologion sive Rituale Graecorum*, (2nd edn, Venice, 1730), 1–8; and PG 154, cols 745–66. Philotheos subsequently promulgated this document throughout the Orthodox world while serving as ecumenical patriarch, thereby setting the stage for the *agrypnia*'s further development in Russia. See Taft, 'Mount Athos', 191–93.

³⁸ An all-night vigil celebrated according to the Philothean *Diataxis* requires the following personnel: a priest, a deacon, a canonarch, two readers, and a pair of antiphonal choirs. In addition, the musical manuscripts call for a minimum of two additional soloists, namely the two *domestikoi* leading the choirs.

'orders of service'.³⁹ Surviving today in dozens of copies, this anthology was the primary vehicle for a musical revolution that brought forth named composers with distinct personal styles cultivating a new 'kalophonic' vocal idiom which was generally distinguished by vocal virtuosity, but could also include textual troping, highly melismatic passages, and even textless vocalizations on nonsense syllables called *kratemata*.⁴⁰ These new techniques were applied most prominently to the chanted psalms of the all-night vigil, which appear in the *akolouthiai* as compilations of through-composed individual psalm-verses.⁴¹ Kalophonic compositions are also regularly provided by these manuscripts as optional codas for more traditional settings of the evening *prokeimenon*, the matutinal responsory 'Πᾶσα πνοὴ αἰνεσάτω τὸν Κύριον', and the *megalynarion* following the ninth ode of the canon.

The salient features of the kalophonic style and its liturgical application quickly become apparent in the following comparison of an anonymous 'Hagioritikon' setting of the *agrypnia*'s ordinary *megalynarion* – the verse and *troparion* 'ἄξιον ἐστιν ... Τὴν τιμιωτέραν ...' – with two alternate codas for this hymn by John Koukouzeles.⁴² Set in mode plagal II, the Athonite chant possesses the generous melodic compass of an octave and a simple structure (ABB'CC') based on the recurrence of opening phrases (Example 13.1).

³⁹ A good introduction to these mss (including a representative list and brief discussions of their composers) is provided by Dimitri Conomos in *The Late Byzantine and Slavonic Communion Cycle: Liturgy and Music*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies 21 (Washington, DC, 1985), 68–82.

⁴⁰ The most comprehensive account of this new style and its application to the Divine Office (together with numerous music examples) is still Williams, 'John Koukouzeles's Reform'.

⁴¹ The following psalmodic chants of the vigil are transmitted by the mss in this form: Psalm 103, the First *Kathisma* of the Psalter (Ps. 1–3), the *Amomos* (Ps. 118), and the *Polyeleos* (Ps. 134–35 with the possible addition of a proper festal psalm). For detailed information about these chants, see the following specialized studies: Maureen Morgan, 'The musical setting of Psalm 134 – the *Polyeleos*', *Studies in Eastern Chant* 3 (Oxford, 1973), 112–23; Diane Toulaitos-Banker, *The Byzantine Amomos Chant of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, *Analecta Vlatadon* 46 (Thessalonike, 1984); Milos Velimirović, 'The prooemiac psalm of Byzantine vespers', in L. Berman, ed., *Words and Music, the Scholar's View* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), 317–37; and Edward Williams, 'The treatment of text in the kalophonic chanting of Psalm 2', in E. Wellesz and M. Velimirović, eds, *Studies in Eastern Chant* 2 (Oxford, 1971), 173–93; idem., 'The kalophonic tradition and chants for *Polyeleos* Psalm 134', in M. Velimirović, ed., *Studies in Eastern Chant* 4 (Crestwood, 1979), 228–41.

⁴² All three chants were transcribed from Athens 2458, a ms. dated 1336 and the earliest copy of Koukouzeles's *akolouthiai* known to have survived. A thorough description of this important ms (including a complete inventory of its contents) is given by Gregorios Th. Stathes, 'Η ᾠσματικὴ διαφοροποίηση ὅπως καταγράφεται στὸν κώδικα ΕΒΕ 2458 τοῦ ἔτους 1336', *Christianike Thessalonike – Palaiologeios Epochē* (Thessalonike, 1989), 167–211. Occasional corrections were made from Athens 2622, an *akolouthiai* ms. dated by Strunk as '1341 to ca. 1360' in 'Antiphons of the Oktoechos', *Essays on Music in the Byzantine World*, 170–71.

Significantly, the *troparion*'s concluding two words ('σὲ μεγαλύνομεν') are repeated several times in the work's extended final section (C') which, although not particularly short or easy, provides a point of reference for its more elaborate substitutes.

Both of the kalophonic compositions by Koukouzeles from the same manuscript begin with the phrase 'Τὴν ὄντως Θεοτόκον', and are presumably designed for insertion after the medial cadence that proceeds these words in shorter settings of the entire hymn. The first of these codas is, like the anonymous Athonite chant, in the second authentic mode. It begins with repetitions of the canonical text that are soon interrupted by a breathless series of epithets for the Virgin Mary: 'τὴν στάμνον, τὴν ῥάβδον, τὴν τῶν οὐρανῶν ὑψηλότεραν, τὴν γέφυραν ...' (Example 13.2), after which a set of triumphant proclamations of the *troparion*'s final words serves to conclude the work. Appropriate to the coda's novel form and text, its melody is much more expressive than that of the traditional setting, ranging over the interval of a tenth. Syllabic passages alternate with melismatic ones as the opposite extremes of its melodic compass are employed in the service of word-painting.⁴³ Overall, this work is reminiscent of an ecstatic confession of love for the Mother of God which bursts forth unexpectedly and yet organically from the official hymn in praise of her.

A similar result is achieved through slightly different means in Koukouzeles's other coda, which begins on the same starting note as the previous settings but proceeds in the fourth plagal mode. In this case, the text 'Τὴν ὄντως Θεοτόκον' gives way to repeated fragments of earlier verses from this same *troparion* (Example 13.3). As before, the vocal compass is a tenth, but here the phrases are longer and the melody includes dramatic leaps as wide as an octave. Towards the end of the work, rational speech gives way to the sequential vocalizations of a *kratema*. This episode of institutionalized pentecostalism starts with short bursts of 'to-to-to-to' that develop into increasingly extended passages of 'te-re-re'. A series of melodic sequences then spins the *kratema* into successively lower vocal registers until it reaches the work's lowest note (d), whereupon it startlingly leaps a seventh upwards, after which the hymn concludes with a reprise of its final line of text.

To place these boldly original compositions in their proper liturgical context, one must recall that they existed side by side with the old syllabic repertoires of the *Heirmologion* and *Sticherarion*. These venerable collections of Stoudite hymns continued to provide the vast majority of texts for the neo-Sabaitic offices with melodies that had changed relatively little over the centuries. On the other hand, it is also obvious that the presence of works by Koukouzeles and his contemporaries within the restored *agrypnia* had

⁴³ For example, τὴν τῶν οὐρανῶν ὑψηλότεραν in the high register.

Handwritten musical notation on ten staves, featuring Greek text (Gospel of Matthew 23:1-12) and musical notation. The notation includes various musical symbols such as neumes, clefs, and accidentals. The text is written in a cursive Greek script. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The text is: *τὴν ὄντως Θεο-ο-τό-κον, σὲ με-γα-λύ-νο-μεν, σὲ με-γα-λύ-νο-μεν, τὴν ὄντως Θεο-ο-τό-κον, τὴν ὁ-μήρου, τὴν ῥάβ-δον, τὴν-λυ-χνί-αν, τὴν φω-ταύ-ραν, τὴν ἐν-φυ-ραν, τὴν κι-βω-τον, τὸν τό-μον, τὸ θυ-μι-α-τή-ρι-ον, τὸν πό-κον, τὴν re-φέ-λην, τὴν πλά-καν, πα-λά-τι-ον, καὶ θρό-νον, καὶ κλῆ-μα-κα, καὶ ὁ-ρος, ἀ-λα-τό-μη-τον, σὲ με-γα-λύ-νο-μεν, σὲ με-γα-λύ-νο-μεν Θεο-ο-τό-κέ, σὲ με-γα-λύ-νο-μεν τὴν ὄν-τως Θεο-ο-τό-κον, τὴν ὄν-τως Θεο-ο-τό-κον, σὲ με-γα-λύ-νο-μεν.*

Note: a) Continuation from MS 2622.

P

EXAMPLE 2

Ἐκκλησιαστικὸν [τοῦ] Κουκουζέλη
Athens MS 2458, f. 60v-61r

tremendous implications for its liturgical ethos – implications that are only apparent after consultation with the appropriate musical manuscripts. The sheer length and complexity of the newly composed chants for the all-night vigil's ordinary herald not only a shift of emphasis away from the often verbose canons and *stichera* of the 'proper', but also imply an increased confidence in the expressive potential of purely musical techniques, and new attitudes toward their application within Orthodox worship. This latter conclusion is underlined by the production of multiple and often highly individual settings of a single text, profoundly altering the correspondence between words and melody in Byzantine chant.

The preceding overview of the relationship between hesychasm and psalmody in fourteenth-century Byzantium has shown that psalmody in its various forms was considered an important monastic virtue which always held the possibility of being infused with true contemplation, provided that it was practised with the mind and heart set on God. This was true not only for cenobitic monks, but also for lavriote hesychasts, many of whom apparently followed a much more balanced rule of private and congregational prayer than they are generally given credit for today. After spending weekdays cultivating quietude, they would return to the community to help celebrate an all-night vigil that was dominated by the most elaborate chant that Byzantium had ever produced. Significantly, the two leading figures in the musical and liturgical reforms of the day, John Koukouzeles and Philotheos Kokkinos, were both residents of the Great Lavra on Athos with strong hesychast credentials.

In the absence of a fourteenth-century text explicitly establishing a causal relationship between monastic spirituality and contemporary musical developments,⁴⁴ it is possible only to present an admittedly circumstantial case linking Koukouzeles's revolutionary style of chanting to hesychasm. Yet it is difficult to dismiss these developments as merely coincidental, for it seems highly unlikely that hesychast fathers would have checked in their spirituality at the gate as they entered the monastery each weekend so that they might spend countless hours following the latest Constantinopolitan (or Thessalonian)⁴⁵ musical fad.

⁴⁴ On the other hand, several fifteenth-century mss transmit tropes to Ps. 103 that clearly refer to the Palamite theology of the uncreated light; e.g. the following composition by Manuel Korones 'κατὰ Βαβλαῶν καὶ Ἀκινδύνου' from Athens ms. 2401, f. 50r and Philotheou ms. 122/235, ff. 49v–50r: 'Glory to Thee, O Lord, who didst show the uncreated light to Thy disciples on Mount Tabor, O Holy Trinity, glory to Thee (Δόξα σοι Κύριε, ὁ φῶς ἀκτιστον τοῖς μαθηταῖς σου ἐμφανίσας ἐν τῷ Θαβώρ, Τριάς ἅγία, δόξα σοι)'. See Stathes, 'Ἡ ἁσματική', 198–99; and Williams, 'A Byzantine *ars nova*', 220; idem., 'John Koukouzeles's reform', 208 (note 9).

⁴⁵ On the possible Thessalonian contribution to the birth of the kalophonic style, see Williams, 'The Kalophonic Polyeleos', 234.

On the contrary, I believe that these phenomena are indeed related, and that their common denominator is to be found in the artistic, liturgical, and even spiritual freedom presupposed by the music of the *akolouthiai*. The late Byzantine choirmaster's new-found ability to effect almost endless variations on the length and style of a service by choosing from its large repertory of strongly differentiated compositions was unprecedented. Following a period of relative liturgical standardization, he was once again free to make musical decisions in response to something other than the prescriptions of a *typikon*, whether it be an aesthetic judgement or the operation of the Holy Spirit. More dramatically, music such as the two optional codas by Koukouzeles examined above offered him not only the opportunity of bursting the bonds of Byzantine hymnography, but even, in the case of *kratemata*, human speech.

Artistic freedom derived from a sense of confidence in God's immanence had, of course, been seen before in both the Christian West and East. In the twelfth century the Abbess Hildegard of Bingen composed hymns with ecstatic texts and virtuosic music in response to visions that she had received from the Lord. During the previous century in Byzantium, St Symeon the New Theologian, who was relentless in his attack on complacent spirituality and formalistic religion, wrote vibrant paraliturgical hymns of great beauty. Although it is impossible to prove beyond dispute, hesychasm's insistence on God's direct accessibility to mortal men in this life⁴⁶ may well have granted John Koukouzeles and his monastic brethren the power to chant 'with boldness and without fear of condemnation'.

⁴⁶ John Meyendorff, 'Mount Athos in the fourteenth century: spiritual and intellectual legacy', *DOP* 42 (1988), 163-64.